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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7385
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD IMMEDIATE 0278
RUEHFL/AMCONSUL FLORENCE IMMEDIATE 2236
RUEHMIL/AMCONSUL MILAN IMMEDIATE 8452
RUEHNP/AMCONSUL NAPLES IMMEDIATE 2385
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
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SUBJECT: ITALIANS PROBE IRAQ, IRAN ON BAGHDAD CONFERENCE

REF: STATE 28320

Classified By: Classified by David D. Pearce, Political Minister Counselor, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) PolMinCouns delivered reftel points to MFA Director General for Mediterranean and Middle Eastern Affairs Cesare Ragaglini on March 7. Ragaglini said Italy believed the conferences were a step in the right direction and would support the outcome whether or not Italy received an invitation. Nevertheless, the GOI had contacted the Iraqi Government to query on possible G8 participation. Italy believed that Iraq Compact participants and G8 donor participants would provide critical economic support to any outcome. The Iraqi Government told Italy that it was open to wider participation but Iran had been opposed. The GOI contacted the Iranian government and was told the Iranian MFA would review the matter. (On March 8, Ragaglini's office director called Pol M/C and said the Iranians had indicated they would favor Italian attendance, either alone or as part of the G8. Formosa said the GOI would follow up with the Iraqis.)

¶2. (C) Ragaglini said it would be important for U.S. officials to meet not only with Iran on Iraq, but also with Syria "for the sake of Lebanon". Pol M/C said the USG was prepared to discuss Iraq, and especially our concerns about Explosively Formed Penetrators, with Iran. By contrast, he had seen no indication of similar plans to talk to Syrian officials. Ragaglini said he had just returned from Lebanon and the situation there seemed completely blocked; everyone professed to be willing to talk, but no one was making any move to do so. On Iran, the GOI had told Iranian Deputy FM Said Jalili that the decision to reject the Secretary's offer to talk on nuclear issues had been a serious miscalculation by Iran. Noting his own service in Iran, he counseled patience if there were a bilateral session, and urged that, even if Iraq were the priority, the USG signal to the Iranians openness to discussions. Pol M/C told him the fact of any such meeting -- and none had been scheduled yet -- would be significant in itself but it was often useful to keep such initial encounters focused on a few specific items.

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